

Readings Booklet

June 1998



English 33

Part B: Reading

Grade 12 Diploma Examination

Copyright 1998, the Crown in Right of Alberta, as represented by the Minister of Education, Alberta Education, Student Evaluation Branch, 11160 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0L2. All rights reserved. Additional copies may be purchased from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre.

Special permission is granted to **Alberta educators only** to reproduce, for educational purposes and on a non-profit basis, parts of this examination that do **not** contain excerpted material **only after the administration of this examination.**

Excerpted material in this examination **shall not** be reproduced without the written permission of the original publisher (see credits page, where applicable).

June 1998

English 33 Part B: Reading

Readings Booklet

Grade 12 Diploma Examination

Description

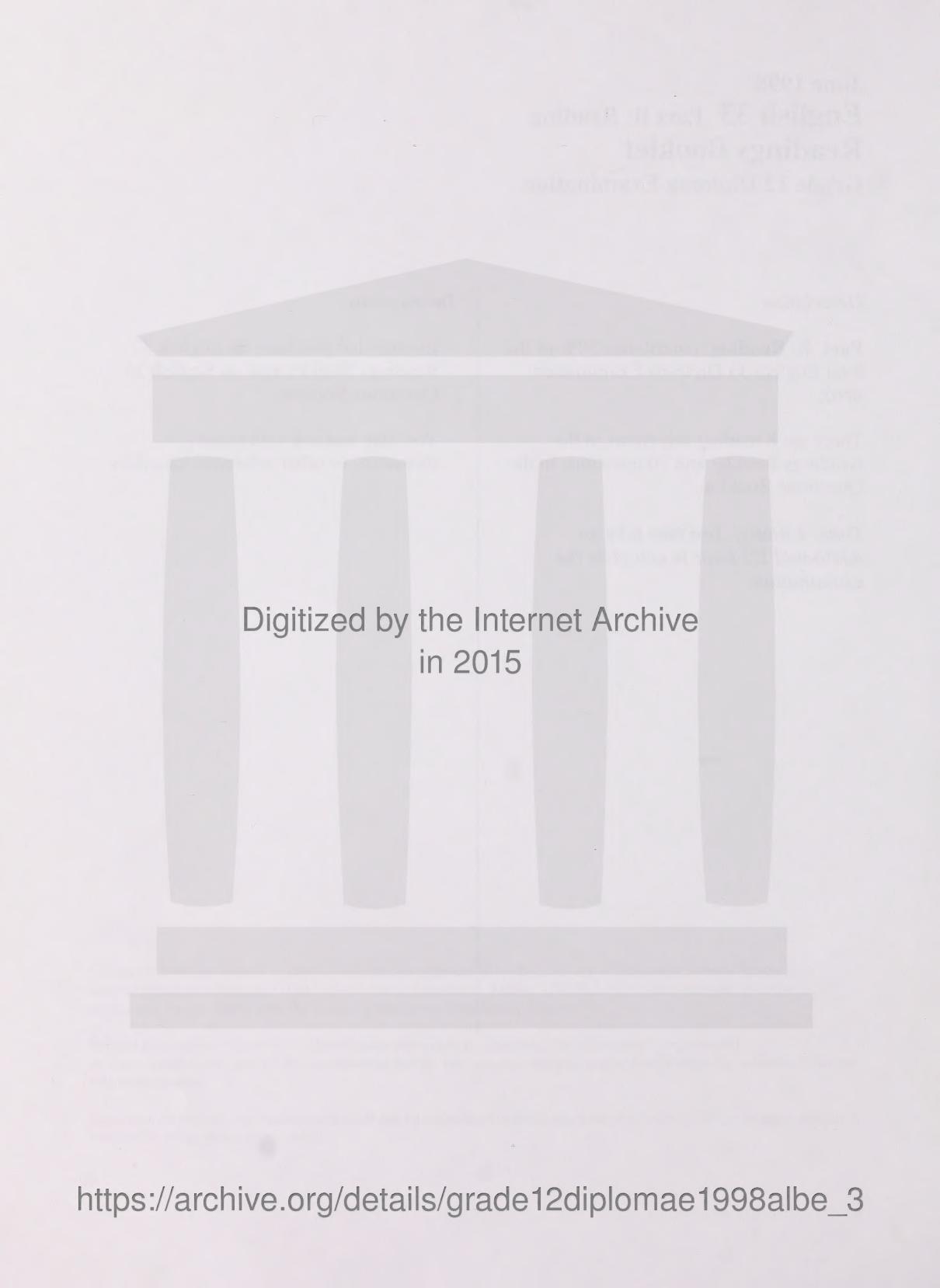
Part B: Reading contributes 50% of the total English 33 Diploma Examination mark.

There are 8 reading selections in the Readings Booklet and 70 questions in the Questions Booklet.

Time: 2 hours. You may take an additional 1/2 hour to complete the examination.

Instructions

- Be sure that you have an English 33 Readings Booklet **and** an English 33 Questions Booklet.
- You may **not** use a dictionary, thesaurus, or other reference materials.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

https://archive.org/details/grade12diplomae1998albe_3

- I. Questions 1 to 9 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from a short story.

from END OF THE EMPIRE

Long ago, when I was young, I was in love with King George the Sixth.¹ It was, as you might imagine, a rather lopsided relationship, but within its limitations so real that his death, in 1952, diminished for some time my expectations for happiness on this earth. Even now I sometimes suffer from a vague and aching

5 sadness, a sorrow wandering in the halls of memory, as if in some hidden part of myself I am still mourning the day he died.

In King George, I recognized a soul very like my own—someone who had, inadvertently, without having any say about it, landed in the wrong life. In him I

10 recognized such a gentle and bewildered dignity my heart was quite pierced through with the arrows of devotion. Neither his daughter's well-meaning and anxious stiffness nor his grandson's self-deprecating wit can duplicate the winsome charm of his stammer, his long-faced sincerity and sweetness. Nothing can bring him back, he is forever gone; and without him, both the world and I have changed.

15 The day he died I was so stricken with grief I had to be kept home from school that afternoon, my face swollen and purple from crying. We received the news of his death on the CBC at noon, from the small brown radio on top of the refrigerator. My father was on evening shift at the foundry that week so he was home and we were all sitting at the kitchen table eating lunch, our usual

20 Campbell's chicken noodle soup and soda crackers and carrot sticks. As the announcer's deep rolling voice and the tolling British bells brought the truth home to us and the rest of Canada, I fell from my chair in a swoon, and with a terrible gasp of "Oh no, my King!" toppled to the floor at my mother's feet. My father, never one for emotional display, told me to straighten round immediately if I

25 didn't want the belt, and my mother said, "Now, now, there's no need for that," but it was not clear whether it was to me or to my father that she spoke.

I gathered myself up and ran sobbing from the kitchen to the bedroom I shared with my older sister, whose jeering laughter I still heard as I slammed the door—cold, older-sister laughter. I flung myself across the white chenille

30 bedspread, lay there face down and felt the fuzzy ridges of its pattern pressing against my cheek as I wept out my despair. My hope for rescue was gone, gone to the grave.

My love for King George had been, until that moment in the kitchen, a private

Continued

¹King George the Sixth—former King of the United Kingdom, the father of Queen Elizabeth II and grandfather of Charles, the current Prince of Wales

thing, a passion too rare to be shared with a family such as mine. I'd always
35 known that: it was part of what made my royal life a necessary secret. My mother
said she had no notion of what made me tick and whenever she said that, my
father would mutter she had better be careful, because bombs tick too and then go
off. It was meant as a joke, suggesting I was a tricky bit of business he didn't
understand, and although it seemed rather a mean thing to say about his child—a
40 bomb, indeed!—he was essentially correct.

Offsetting them, in fortuitous counterbalance, King George understood me
absolutely. He and I were united at a deep and invisible level, as if connected by a
silent underground river running beneath our lives. This became apparent the first
45 time he saw me, the lids of his blue eyes fluttering momentarily and then opening
with something like astonishment or delight. He saw me for the first time many
times, as I refined the pleasurable details of the scene. But always the heart of it
remained the same: we belonged together, the King and I. Because of his age,
and mine, the way in which we would fit would be father and daughter, but that
was merely a matter of convenience and fate. Our destiny was interwoven, of that
50 I was sure.

The events leading up to King George's happy discovery of me, Hannah Louise Clement, were always the same. I would have been found in a large green park by his younger daughter, Princess Margaret Rose, who would take me home to the Palace. . . .

55 Even in the park where it was rainy and chilly, dusk coming on, mist rising from the lawns, Margaret Rose appeared to be perfectly turned out, as if royal radiance kept her dry. The park in my mind's eye bore a fairly strong resemblance to Victoria Park, a few blocks from where I lived in London, Ontario. A small and very ordinary city park crisscrossed with asphalt paths, it extended in my
60 imagination far past its normal boundaries, became larger and greener, full of rose beds and glass-globe lamps shining dimly in the fog. The weather was always English and wet in this sequence: there was never sunshine, never snow, as if I knew instinctively the climatic demands of my private mythology.

Although Princess Margaret Rose seemed above ordinary physical
65 discomfort, it distressed her royal heart to see me, Hannah Louise, huddled on a park bench . . . hungry, outcast, alone. She would scrutinize me by bringing her dimpled face in its nest of curls very close to mine and then she would stand back, and pronounce her sentence very clearly: she would take me home to her father, the King.

70 Exactly how I knew that King George would want to adopt me as soon as he set eyes on me, I am not to this day sure. I saw *him* only infrequently in black-and-white newsreels at the movie house on Saturdays, and in a few colour photographs in magazines or in the corridors at school. But I knew, with the

Continued

intuition of the truly blessed, that he and I were cut from the same cloth. That is
75 not to say that I had delusions of grandeur or believed myself to be of royal blood,
my lineage lost and muddled over the years because of some Dickensian²
nursemaid. Rather, it was from the fine and innocent certainty that station in life
meant nothing, a kind of childish notion of pure equality. . . .

I was a thin, unadventurous child who preferred fantasy because less than a
80 decade in this world had convinced me that reality was a punishing and difficult
affair. Sometime shortly after kindergarten, perhaps as a result of a determined
teacher insisting I use my right hand instead of my left, I developed a slight stutter,
which had a way of coming and going so that I never knew exactly when I was
85 going to stumble and fall over a syllable. The very random nature of this thing
meant no one could find a way to cure it, and the family doctor simply assured my
mother that I would, eventually, grow out of it. Which, of course, I did, except for
occasional lapses when I am angry or afraid. . . .

Margaret Rose, on the other hand, had a heart of gold, and I feel for her still a
grateful fondness. She did not hesitate to rescue a wet little waif from the park
90 and to share, with angelic generosity, her father and her life. . . .

I would be led to the throne room by Margaret Rose, who'd take my hand in a
bossy but kindly way. . . .

The King . . . would be sitting with his hands folded in his lap, as if he'd been
waiting for me to appear, and when I did, he would say to Margaret Rose, "What's
95 this, then?"

I would walk carefully up the long purple carpet to where he sat, and make a
deep curtsey, and he would rise from his throne and touch my hair with his hand
and say, "There, there, child. Enough." And I would look up at his face—the
long, sad cheeks, the remarkable expanse from nose to lip, the thin lip itself—and
100 see in his lovely eyes the perfect understanding of which I spoke earlier, and the
flicker of paternal joy.

Bashfully, for neither of us were any good at making conversation, we would
talk to each other about our lives. This episode would usually serve as a review of
what I was doing in school at the time, and I would tell the King everything I
105 knew. The routes of the explorers, the toughest multiplication tables, all the
verses of the poems I had memorized by Walter de la Mare and Christina
Rossetti³—all these things and more, without hesitation or stutter. And he too
spoke clearly and calmly, in a voice rich and warm and even, in the voice a king
should have. In the voice I gave him. And he would say, in this wonderful voice,
110 that he was amazed at the depth and breadth of my knowledge.

Continued

²Dickensian—refers to British novelist Charles Dickens

³Walter de la Mare and Christina Rossetti—English poets

"Why, I think you know more than either of my girls do," he would say. And then: "What would you think about coming to live here at the Palace? You are just the sort of girl I like to talk to." . . .

Conveniently, I was only recently orphaned, my insensitive family having perished in a car accident or a tragic fire or from food poisoning at a picnic, and thus there were no obstacles to surmount. I would shyly nod my assent, and the court stenographer would be called to draw up immediately the adoption papers. I'd sign my name, Hannah Louise, with a flourish, and King George would raise his eyebrows in appreciation of my fine hand, and then apply himself to his own signature. This would be followed by a hot wax seal, red and dripping, as the parchment would be lifted up, and the announcement made: "Hannah Louise Clement is now of the House of Windsor."

Generally speaking, I never progressed beyond this point. The ceremony in itself was the culmination of all my hopes and dreams, and there was no need for dénouement.⁴ And it was only the King's death that brought me back to the suburban street and two-storey frame house in which I dwelled with a father and mother who couldn't figure me out, and a sister who thought, if she ever gave me a thought, that I was weird.

Her name was Phyllis Anne, and in the weeks following my downfall in the kitchen she needled and teased me and made me miserable at every turn.

Isabel Huggan
Contemporary Canadian writer

⁴dénouement—final resolution in a work of narrative fiction, such as a play or novel; the unravelling of plot or complications

II. Questions 10 to 15 in your Questions Booklet are based on this poem.

NEIGHBOUR

- From across the street
we see her scissored
off by walls.
A hand quick as a lizard
5 takes in the milk
and once a week a sheet
weeps on the line.
That's all that's all
there is so why envy her?
- 10 Nutty old maid spinster
crazy woman crazy woman
her silhouette balloons on silk
tassled blinds
private as a witch or a wizard
15 or a goddess, letting no one in,
choosing—that's the word—choosing no one.

Carol Shields
Contemporary Canadian poet,
novelist, playwright, and critic

III. Questions 16 to 25 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from a play.

from WAITING FOR THE PARADE

Waiting for the Parade is play about five women and how they manage to survive the war years (1939–1945). Two of these women, CATHERINE and EVE, throw themselves with gusto into the new fashions; here, they are experimenting with hairstyles.

[The events in this excerpt take place in Calgary, Alberta, probably at some time in 1940 or 1941.]

CATHERINE's husband BILLY was among the first Calgarians to enlist when the Second World War broke out. [He is now in England, and although she admires him for his sense of duty, she still has mixed feelings about his enlistment.]

EVE, on the other hand, is married to [HARRY] a man far older than she—too old, in fact, to be eligible for the army. She is horrified by the brutality of the war and by her inability to alleviate any of the suffering it causes.

(CATHERINE is standing in front of EVE, with her back to the audience, brushing EVE's hair. Both wear large towels around their shoulders.)

CATHERINE: Stop wiggling! Wait a second. There. Now you're gorgeous.
(She steps away from EVE. Both have put "fashionable" white streaks
through their hair.)

CATHERINE: Now you're perfection.

(She gives EVE a hand mirror. EVE looks at herself.)

EVE: Oh no. Harry will kill me.

CATHERINE: I like it.

10 EVE: If HE doesn't kill me, the superintendent of schools will. (She lowers the mirror.) What do you really think?

CATHERINE: I think we're both gorgeous.

EVE (Looking in the mirror again): I look like a cross between Rita Hayworth¹ and a skunk.

15 (CATHERINE laughs and tries to take the mirror from her.)

CATHERINE: You'll get used to it.

(EVE hangs on to the mirror.)

EVE: Harry will kill me.

Continued

¹Rita Hayworth—a glamorous movie star popular in the 1940s

- CATHERINE: Put the mirror down.
- 20 EVE (*Still looking in the mirror*): It just isn't the proper image for an educator.
You don't know. Those Grade 10s can be vicious.
- CATHERINE: Put the mirror down! Give yourself a minute to adjust.
- EVE: Harry will kill me.
- CATHERINE: . . . put the mirror down!
- 25 (She reaches for the mirror. EVE quickly puts it down in her lap.)
- CATHERINE: Let's talk about something else.
- EVE: All right. (*Pause*) What?
- CATHERINE: I got a letter yesterday.
(*She takes the letter from her dress pocket.*)
- 30 EVE: So you said.
- CATHERINE: The first one in weeks. It's his second winter over there. (*She reads from the letter.*) "So cold and damp, the birds are dying of rheumatism in mid-air and dropping to the ground, dead on arrival."
- EVE: Not seriously?
- 35 CATHERINE: Billy's afraid his regiment's gone sour on the war. (*She reads from the letter.*) "Six months we've been sitting around in tents, not enough room to stand up in. We're ready as we'll ever be, but nobody's said a word about moving any Canadians to the front. Another month and we'll be soft again."
(*Pause*)
- 40 EVE (*Starting to raise the mirror*): May I look at my hair now?
- CATHERINE: Not yet.
- EVE (*Putting the mirror down*): Well, do we have to talk about the war? I get enough of that from Harry. It'll only depress us. Isn't anything else happening in the world anymore?
- 45 CATHERINE (*Putting the letter away*): For instance?
(*Pause*)
- EVE: I was looking at our enrollment for next year. Guess how many boys have registered for Grade 12 Matric.² Guess.
- CATHERINE: I give up.
- 50 EVE: Eight. EIGHT. And half of those will be sneaking off to the recruiting station before mid-term. While I'm drilling them in the socio-political history of Greece, they're daydreaming about machine guns. "The Bren³—the mighty Bren!" they call it. (*She makes a loud noise, like a machine gun.*)
- CATHERINE: Don't talk about the war. It'll only depress us.
- 55 EVE: Harry greets me with that insane noise at the breakfast table every morning.
(*She makes the machine gun noise again.*) Then he laughs his head off. He's

Continued

²Matric—an abbreviation for “matriculation,” a name given to the program of courses required for university entrance

³Bren—a British machine gun used in the Second World War

never fully recovered from being told he's too old for active service. (*Pause*) I should've married someone nearer to my own age. Senility strikes early in Harry's family. (*Pause. Raising the mirror again.*) May I look at my hair now?

60

CATHERINE: Not yet!

(*She snatches the mirror, glances at her own hair, then lays the mirror aside.*)

EVE: Well, let's not talk about Harry anymore.

65

CATHERINE: I second that motion.

(*Pause*)

EVE: Tell me about your work, down at the plant?

CATHERINE: Not much to tell. I make sandwiches. I sell Orange Kik and jujubes four times a day. It's somewhere to go, something to do. And I need the 70 money.

EVE: Working around all those men—it doesn't make you nervous?

CATHERINE: Men have never made me nervous.

EVE: They've never made me anything but. (*Pause*) May I look at—?

CATHERINE: NOT YET.

75

(*Pause*)

EVE: Last week Harry joined the Mounted Constabulary.

CATHERINE: The what?

EVE: The Calgary Mounted Constabulary! Ta-ta! A bunch of old men with horses and chaps and pith helmets. From dusk to dawn they bravely patrol 80 the Reservoir. On guard against enemy infiltration! I asked Harry, "Who would want to infiltrate a reservoir?" I thought he was going to hit me.

(*Pause*) Did you write Billy for permission to take a job?

CATHERINE (*Laughs and shakes her head*): He would've said "no."

EVE: And if he finds out, he'll be angry?

85

CATHERINE: He'll be ashamed. He'll feel like he's let us down.

EVE: But you don't feel that way?

CATHERINE: I try not to think about it. "There's a war on."

EVE (*Rising suddenly*): Please, please don't say that! I'm sick of hearing it!

Listen, you know what the latest insanity is?

90

CATHERINE: Why don't you sit down?

EVE (*Beginning to pace*): I read that Leslie Howard⁴ has offered his services to the British war effort! LESLIE HOWARD!

CATHERINE: Maybe you should look at your hair now.

EVE: I wanted to scream! And they're bombing Great Britain! GREAT BRITAIN !

95

CATHERINE: I know that. Billy's there.

Continued

⁴Leslie Howard—internationally famous British movie star

EVE: They're bombing Great Britain! They're bombing France! They're bombing Norway! They're bombing Belgium! We're back in the Dark Ages! Wasting lives, spilling blood all over Europe!

CATHERINE: Sit down!

100 **EVE** (*Pacing more and more frantically*): And Leslie Howard's in the middle of all that! An actor! A distinguished artist! Your Billy can hardly wait for a chance to be a part of the slaughter! And my husband would be leading the dance of death with a saber if he weren't too old! But they said it'd all be over in a few months! I remember an editorial—in the Toronto paper—!

105 . . . (CATHERINE has risen, crosses to EVE, catches her by the shoulders and shakes her. Pause. EVE's head droops.)

EVE: Sorry. The first thing they taught us at Normal School⁵ was self-control. An educator mustn't lose her grip on herself. Sorry.

110 **CATHERINE:** At least you forgot about your damned hair for a minute. (*Putting one arm around EVE's shoulders, she offers her the mirror.*) Go ahead. Take a peek. And I'll buy you a Coca Cola if you don't feel one hundred percent better about it now.

115 (EVE takes the mirror, holds it close and looks at herself. She bursts into tears, drops the mirror and covers her face with both hands. CATHERINE holds her.)

John Murrell
Contemporary Canadian playwright

⁵Normal School—teachers received their training in colleges called normal schools before teacher training was integrated into the university system in Alberta

IV. Questions 26 to 34 in your Questions Booklet are based on this article.

A SIP OF DANDELION WINE

A few years ago I walked through the streets of Waukegan, [Illinois], renamed Green Town in my novel *Dandelion Wine*. I came to the old house on the corner of St. James and Washington, where my grandparents had lived and where I had thrived as a child.

5 The lawn was a pure green carpet, starred with a multitude of dandelions. I stood on its edge like someone about to dive in and swim out to the middle of summer. Then I walked to the centre of all that green and bent to select a single huge dandelion.

As I did, a voice called from the front porch. "If I see a stranger in my lawn
10 picking a dandelion," an old woman said, "it must be Ray Bradbury."

"Yes'm," I said, and blushed.

"Well, now, come in," she said, gazing down at me. "Let me show you where
you used to live."

15 Obediently, I climbed the porch stairs to pass into the hall, where bright panels of stained glass—cherry, lemon, grape and summer green—framed the clear central window. Through them I had once stared, moving from pane to pane, causing pedestrians, dogs and cats to change complexions as they strolled or ran by—here a tangerine cat, there a pink mongrel and just beyond, a man mysteriously coloured by my shifting gaze.

20 From there to the library, where my grandfather sat for years, enchanted with the nightly newspaper; thence into the dining room, where a tidal wave of relatives had once roared on the shoreline of Thanksgiving; and to the steps leading down to the cellar, where, perhaps, bright bottles of dandelion wine had been stashed in August to warm the long, cold days of February.

25 I say perhaps, for memory is as fragile as the frost on windows of winter, which a single breath steamed forth from a boy's nostrils can melt.

I inhaled deeply the dank air rising from the basement. But I did not descend. I wanted to believe that what was down there had remained, waiting for me, for more than half a lifetime.

30 I took coffee with the nice old woman and then walked downtown. When I reached the barbershop, I touched the screen door and stepped in.

The town barber, a man somewhere in his 70s, glanced up, squinted, then gave a great shout.

... "I been waiting for you to come through that door for 40 years!"

Continued

35 "Who are *you*?" I cried back.
 "Ben Powell. Your grandma's boarder when you were three years old."
 "Now I remember," I said. "Last time I saw you, you were 20."
 "Time *does* pass." The barber turned to his chair. "Sit!" he said.
40 I climbed up and was a boy once again, three feet high and the centre of an embarrassing universe.
 "You know the one dead certain thing I remember about you when you were three?" the barber asked me.
 "What?"
45 "Hold on." He bent to pick up his comb and scissors. "Can't talk without my equipment."
 He began to snip—a bit here, a bit there—and his warm breath perambulated along with the scissors.
50 "I remember your grandpa giving you and your brother a nickel apiece and two gunnysacks, saying: 'Skedaddle to the empty lot across the street. It's full of dandelions. Pick 'em. Fill the sacks. Drag 'em down in the basement and dump 'em in the wine press. Then the three of us'll wind the press down, and what'll come out will be dandelion wine!'"
 His last two words and the buzzing tickle of the silver bumble-bee electric clippers roused up every hair on my head, down my neck and along my spine. I
55 sat upright, shocked.
 "Say that *again!*" I said.
 "You didn't hear?"
 "Yes," I said. "But, oh, say it again."
60 He said it again, and I felt myself grow warm and then very cold. His voice stopped as he buzzed the clippers on the peach fuzz inside my left ear. I shivered with joy and remembrance. No tears fell, but my eyes were wet.
 . . . I said, slumping back in the chair, "it really *happened!*"
 "It?"
 "The dandelions. The wine press. The wine."
65 "Twenty or 30 bottles, give or take a few, over the years. Till your grandpa died."
 "All this time I wasn't sure whether it was a real memory or something I made up," I said. "I wrote it down in a novel anyway, hoping it was real."
 "It was real."
70 Everything came back in a rush. The front porch on Fourth of July nights, the family and boarders shooting off fireworks until midnight. Halloweens, laying table extensions on the steps and sliding people down in the dark, past the wine, into the coal bin.
 I leaned forward. "What does the wine taste like?" I asked.

Continued

- 75 “Your grandpa gave you a sip once.”
“That’s a long while back—”
“Well, it’s not the taste, anyway; it’s the idea. You consider how long
winter is, and you keep the bottle handy. You may never uncork it. Just knowing
it’s there, left over from the last picnic before October. I’ve kept a bottle around
80 ten years sometimes. Just a sip. A trifle bitter. Adding orange juice takes the
edge off.”
“You happen to remember the recipe?”
“Why wouldn’t I?” He laughed quietly. “Lean back. Relax.” Then he
recited, eyes shut:
85 “One gallon blossoms put through the press; add one gallon boiling water; let
stand 24 hours; strain two or three times through cloth; add three pounds white
sugar, one yeast cake, juice of one lemon, three oranges; when finished add orange
peels; let stand three weeks; strain and bottle tight.”
He opened his eyes. “But first—” He reapplied the summer bee to my close-
90 to-autumn neck. “First, find the flowers,” he said.

I tapped at the back screen door of the house. The old woman appeared.
“I’d . . .” I hesitated. “I’d like, this time, to actually go into my
grandparents’—into *your* cellar.”
At the top of the stairs I looked into darkness. I was no longer afraid to go
95 down there. It was empty, but it was no longer empty. I could fill it with a glance.
I went down the stairs and did not turn on the light.
I stood looking at the cellar windows where once bottles had been placed. In
them the sun had been caught, capped and then labelled: Summer 1921. Summer
1922. Summer 1923.
100 I put them there, one by one, without touching or seeing. *I can drink you, too,*
I thought, *without touching a bottle or filling a glass.*
I did just that and was drunk with time.

Ray Bradbury
Contemporary American writer

V. Questions 35 to 43 in your Questions Booklet are based on this article.

IT'S NOT THE HEAT, IT'S THE HUMIDITY

- When the weather in southern Ontario turns humid, some prize dairy Holsteins produce less milk and conceive fewer offspring.
- At the Orford Arts Centre in Orford, [Quebec], pianos have to be tuned twice a day when the humidity is high. Often a tuner stands in the wings to make emergency adjustments during concerts.
- In the southern United States, summers are so humid that, according to local wags, you'll see a hound dog chasing a jackrabbit, and both will be walking. But in Canada, while we know how to cope with bone-chilling winters, many of us haven't learned the tricks of dealing with a summer turned hot and muggy. We run around, overexerting ourselves, trying to conduct business as usual—and we often end up miserable, exhausted or even seriously ill.
- What is this sultry thing that's all around us, wreaking havoc, affecting our bodies, our minds, even our pocketbooks? The answer, of course, is humidity—which is simply a measure of the amount of water in the air. Relative humidity, the term most commonly used to describe atmospheric moisture, compares actual water vapour with the amount of water the air can
- absorb at a particular temperature. The warmer the air, the more water it can hold: 32°C air can soak up almost twice as much water as 21° air.
- The oceans are the main source of humidity, but plants also pour moisture into the air. In one day a two-hectare forest can release 76,000 litres of water, enough to fill an average swimming pool. A dryer extracts moisture from wet clothes, adding to humidity. Even breathing contributes to this sticky business. Every time we exhale, we expel 473 millilitres of moist air into the atmosphere.
- Using sophisticated measuring devices, science is learning more and more about the far-reaching and often surprising impact humidity has on all of us. A few summers ago, angry callers phoned American Television and Communications [Corporation's] cable-TV operation in northeastern Wisconsin, complaining about a fuzzy picture and poor reception. "What happened," said the chief engineer, "was that the humidity was interfering with our signals." When a blast of dry air invaded the state, the number of complaints dropped sharply.
- Moisture plays hob with our mechanical world as well. Water condensation on the playing heads

Continued

- and tapes of videocassette recorders produces a streaky picture.
- Humidity shortens the life of flashlight and smoke-detector batteries. When the weather gets
- 80 sticky, the rubber belts that power the fan, air conditioner and alternator under the hood of our cars can get wet and squeaky.
- Humidity also speeds the deterioration of treasured family photos and warps priceless antiques. Your home's wooden support beams, doors and window frames absorb extra moisture and expand—
- 90 swelling up to three percent depending on the wood, its grain and the setting.
- Too much moisture promotes blight that attacks potato and green-bean crops—adding to food costs. “Humidity is great for spreading disease in plants,” says Charles Thompson, a vegetable specialist with the Nova Scotia Department of
- 100 Agriculture. It also contributes to the production of rust¹ in wheat, which can affect grain production.
- Experts at the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, in Hamilton, say high heat and humidity can seriously hamper workers’ ability to perform both physical and mental tasks, and can provoke work-related accidents.
- 110 Several years ago, when a humid heat wave hit southern Ontario—the country’s muggiest region—the humidity caused production delays and work stoppages. Some
- industrial plants even closed down, fearing that the combination of heat and humidity would adversely affect the workers’ health.
- 120 Research shows that 90-percent humidity makes a pleasant temperature of 27° feel like a 31° heat wave. Dry air absorbs sweat as fast as the body’s several million sweat glands produce it, keeping us cool. Humid air—already saturated with moisture—can’t absorb sweat. Perspiration builds up on the skin, body temperature goes up and we’re miserable.
- 130 Humidity affects our health too. We get more migraine headaches, ulcer attacks, blood clots and skin rashes in hot, humid weather. According to Environment Canada, as the humidity rises, our bodies may react in increasingly dangerous ways. We can suffer fatigue, nausea, dizziness, vomiting, fainting, cramps and—at the high end of the scale—coma and death.
- 140 On average, the deaths of 11 Canadians each year are directly related to high heat and humidity. The elderly, especially, may die of strokes and heart attacks.
- As humidity soars, urban violence seems to rise. “Hot, humid weather can push some people over the edge,” says Dr. Rex Collins, a psychologist at Toronto’s Sunnybrook Health Science Centre. “There’s often much more domestic violence during a heat wave.”
- Appearances wither too. Oily skin

Continued

¹rust—plant disease with rust-coloured spots caused by parasitic fungi

- breaks out. Human hair absorbs enough extra moisture to stretch nearly 2.5 percent in length, making curly hair frizz and straight hair wilt. "I look and feel like a wet dishrag at times like this," wailed a beauty-salon patron during one of Montreal's sticky spells.
- Adding insult to injury, humidity even makes us look fatter. "When heat and humidity rise," says Dr. Maurice Dufresne, owner of a chain of Montreal weight-loss clinics, "the kidneys and intestinal tract react by making the body retain water. The resulting swelling can add an inch to the waistline and legs."
- But the news about humidity is not all bad. Highly humidified air can be a lifesaver for people suffering from pneumonia, bronchial infection and other lung-related conditions. And contact lenses are more comfortable to wear in humid weather.
- Still, there is something relentless about the days when summer seems to simmer. For those without air conditioning or fans, here are some good ways to beat the heat:
- If you can stand the thought, Gabrielle Savard, a physiologist at Queen's University, suggests that drinking a hot beverage or taking a warm shower might be of some benefit. This will make you sweat
- more, and that is helpful because sweating removes the heat from your body, making you more comfortable.
- Eat less, because metabolism raises body heat. And drink lots of water. But avoid too many caffeinated beverages. Caffeine is a diuretic that promotes urine flow and dries the body out. Cut down on alcoholic and highly sugared drinks too. Alcohol dehydrates the body, and sugar delays water absorption.
 - Don't overexert yourself during the hottest parts of the day. Restrict exercise to early morning or late afternoon. Make sure your body is acclimatized to the weather before doing any strenuous physical activity; your body can take days—even weeks—to get used to muggy weather, so start slowly. Even better, get your exercise and cool off at the same time. Go for a swim.
 - Dress appropriately. Loose cotton clothing increases airflow, drawing moisture from the surface and keeping body temperature down.
- Sometimes, of course, there's just simply no dealing with humidity. Energy dwindles, and the most stringent resolve melts. When this happens, blame the weatherman. He's used to it.

Patricia Skalka
Contemporary Canadian writer

- VI. Robin is preparing a report entitled “Humidity and Humanity.” Read the first draft of Robin’s report, carefully noting her revisions, and answer questions 44 to 50 in your Questions Booklet.

HUMIDITY AND HUMANITY

Paragraph 1 Were you ever curious about what the expression “blame it on the humidity” means? When I researched this topic, I found Patricia Skalka’s essay “It’s Not the Heat, It’s the Humidity” to be really helpful. For instance, what would a Holstein cow whose milk production has dropped, fuzzy television reception, and blighted potatoes have in common? All these occurrences can be blamed on humidity that results from hot air drawing up moisture; the greater the heat, the greater the amount of moisture the air can contain. This combination of heat and moisture can have both positive and negative affects.

Paragraph 2 But before we consider the consequences of humidity, we should understand how it comes about. Most humidity comes from oceans; plant life also gives off moisture. Even human beings, through exhaling, add to the humidity. When people run their dryers, they contribute to the humidity in the air. ~~We may conclude, therefore, say that with the combination of large sources of water with high temperatures, that will produce you're going to have high humidity.~~ ^{I guess you can}

How does humidity affect people?

Paragraph 3 Perhaps their videocassette recorders have produced streaky pictures, which may come from moisture in the air condensing on the playing heads. But more serious than that, humidity can cause the spread of destructive plant diseases.

Continued

This spread can affect everyone. Crops are destroyed; supplies become limited; food prices rise. Humid heat can make people feel generally unwell; they feel tired or dizzy or nauseated. Humidity can increase skin rashes, ulcers, and migraines. At its worst, humidity can cause coma or death. Many people have noticed how edgy they get in hot, humid weather. Humidity can actually make people violent—apparently riots and revolutions occur more frequently in hot, humid weather. In other words, many problems can be attributed to humidity.

- Paragraph 4** Can anything good result from ~~this~~^{high} humidity? For people with bronchial infections and breathing problems such as asthma humidity can bring relief. People who wear contact lenses can benefit, too, because humidity can make lenses less irritating.
- Paragraph 5** When the humidity is high and people feel like “wet dishrags,” what can be done about it? Patricia Skalka suggests that we wear loose-fitting cotton clothes that “breathe” and that we save most active exercise for the cool hours of the day. And, although it may sound illogical, the article suggests that we should drink hot beverages and take warm showers—these activities cause sweating, and sweating cools a person down. Cooling off and exercise can both be achieved by swimming. But on those days when nothing seems to beat the heat—blame it on the humidity.

VII. Questions 51 to 58 in your Questions Booklet are based on this poem.

AIR AMBULANCE

They came running at the improbable din,¹
To the antennae creature lightly
Cogitating on the hill.
A space-man climbed out: slim, ruddy, young,
5 Swamped by delirious children;
Pleasantly eyeing Earth, not quite with aplomb.²

A ring of grown-ups, arms across, looked on
From various tribes, including born North Londoners,
Many scrape-voiced and white. A man had fallen
10 From a window. They weren't here for blood.
Nobody swore; no one set a dog.
A bobby³ easily cleared the stretcher's way.

Strapped-down and red-blanketed, he, if
Not dead soon, was in his luck,
15 Ran the single thought they gave him
While it steadied itself, conferred,
And lifted above the glorious noisy wind
As if all things were becoming; rolled and moiled⁴—

It tilted, took on the rights of air and shot
20 Itself as from a crossbow, cleanly south.
Far off it looked the thing it was.
Hands in their sweatpants they drifted back,
Muted or chatty, for a smoke
And tea and tv, almost emptying the park.

Anne Rouse
Contemporary British poet

¹din—disturbing noise

²aplomb—self-assurance

³bobby—policeman

⁴moiled—mixed, churned about

VIII. Questions 59 to 70 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from a short story.

from THE MYTHICAL KID

It was Kozicki's father who told them about him in the first place. Hendershot and young Kozicki were inseparable in those days. (Hendershot would claim they were nine, Kozicki that they were ten. In fact, they were between those two ages....)

5 Hendershot and Kozicki. Kozicki and Hendershot. On Saturday mornings they worked for Kozicki's old man, at the nursery up on the hill, watering trees, weeding shrubbery, raking cut grass, trimming hedges....

"Now listen you guys—"

And they listened, for Mr. Kozicki . . . [who] had been a farmer, was now a 10 landscape gardener. He wore baggy green pants with suspenders, and in his opinion there were two kinds of jobs: jobs done right, and jobs done wrong.

"Listen here. Be sure you get every weed between the rows, be sure you get the roots. Lay them out, roots up, like this. And watch those sprinklers I've got on the seedlings at the bottom end. Every half hour or so, one of you go down 15 there and move them. They might look harmless, but left untended they could flood out the whole bottom end." . . . He got to the point. "Keep your eye on things, that's all I'm saying. You have to consider all the possibilities. Watch the sprinklers, don't cut into the irrigation pipe with your hoes, don't cut off any tree roots. I knew a kid once, on the farm. He put a milk machine on a Jersey and 20 took off to hunt squirrels. By the time he got back, the cow was sucked dry, the machine had short-circuited, and straw had caught fire—"

And so on. Mr. Kozicki knew a kid once. Everybody knew a kid once. Who disobeyed, who forgot, who lied, cheated, took foolish chances. And what happened? The wolves ate the flock, the dike overflowed, the soldiers rushed in, 25 the barn burned down.

"Death, pestilence, plague," said Mr. Kozicki. . . . "And all because of that kid. Sure," he wiped his sweating bald head with his shirtsleeve, "you've heard it all before, who hasn't? The mythical kid, right?"

"What mythical kid?" Kozicki wanted to know. 30 "The death pestilence plague kid," Mr. Kozicki said, winking. "Been around for donkey's years." He put on his hat. "Don't let him show up here; do your job right."

When Kozicki's old man was gone, they talked about the mythical kid for a while, though neither one of them was sure what mythical *meant*.

Continued

- 35 By noon they were finished for the day. Out of habit they locked their hoes in the tool shed and shut off the main water valve at the greenhouse. They walked up through the nursery—rows of birch, chokecherry, juniper, scotchpine, and blue spruce—to Kozicki's house, a white clapboard two-storey structure fronted by a ramshackle veranda and a massive weeping willow. . . .
- 40 It was hot and they were sweating. Hendershot was stripped to the waist, Kozicki wore his short-sleeved plaid shirt unbuttoned. . . .
- In the kitchen they found plates of bread, cold ham, sliced tomatoes, cheese, and nectarines.
- “Rob,” Kozicki’s mother called from the living room. “There’s fruit punch in
- 45 the refrigerator.”
- Fruit punch. Hendershot’s mother kept water or lemonade. And not in a refrigerator; in a fridge.
- They ate quickly.
- Mrs. Kozicki was a tall frail woman with curly dark hair and a cough that
- 50 burbled deep in her chest. She regularly lived on her chesterfield (she did not call it a couch) for days at a time, behind sun-yellowed venetian blinds. Hendershot’s own mother called Vivian Kozicki snooty, but that brought to his mind someone with a long upturned nose and piglike nostrils. Mrs. Kozicki’s nose, if anything, was beautiful. On certain days, Hendershot thought, so was she. . . .
- 55 “Don’t smack your lips,” she called from the living room.
- They went to her respectfully. Hendershot always approached her as though he were nearing royalty, as though the cluttered chesterfield were a throne, the cotton print dresses gold brocade. To Kozicki she was familiar, his mother, after all, yet he was wary in her presence, eager for what she might or might not do.
- 60 (“She’s always *thinking*,” was the way his father put it.) . . .
- “Open the blinds, please,” she said from the chesterfield. “Good. Now, what I require are delight, astonishment, and awe.”
- “You finished it already,” Kozicki said. Hendershot stepped closer; the Kozicki family, he knew, was one of secrets, midnight schemes, planned surprises.
- 65 On Victoria Day, Mr. Kozicki had been known to surprise the town with unannounced fireworks displays, shot from the hilltop nursery.
- “Delight,” Mrs. Kozicki said. “Astonishment.” From somewhere in the clutter she withdrew the airplane.
- . . . His mother handed him the model plane and lit another cigarette. . . .
- 70 For Kozicki—nine-year-old designer, draftsman, originator-of-the-idea—the plane assumed heroic proportions. Though the wingspan measured an earthbound 35 inches, in his imagination it stretched half the width of the ceiling. The balsa wood skeleton was covered with treated tissue paper, a skin that enclosed wings

Continued

and fuselage. Glued, doped, painted, it concealed a thick rubber band which, 75 when corkscrewed clockwise, drove the plastic propeller. The colours were pure World War II . . . olive drab, golden brown, red white blue bullseyes on the wings and fuselage. Mrs. Kozicki had fitted the wheel struts solidly . . . and thus introduced Robbie and his sidekick to a larger possibility: that adults and children occupy the same world.

80 The three of them went outside, Mrs. Kozicki (not so old, they noticed, in the sunlight, though momentarily knotted by a coughing fit) supported by a straight-standing polite Hendershot, already as tall as her shoulder which smelled of cigarettes and lilacs. . . .

85 On the lawn of Kozicki's hill, with their eyes slit against the glare, they could see the lake glitter below. . . .

"That stabilizer's a little uncertain," Mrs. Kozicki said. "It should be higher."

"It looks okay," Hendershot said.

90 Kozicki examined the model's undercarriage, wheels, propeller, wing angles. Satisfied, he held out the plane. "You wind it up," he told Hendershot. "Tight, but not too."

Under Hendershot's index finger the rubber band tightened, tightened, while Mrs. Kozicki, definitely young now, stood to one side laughing, the breeze in her skirt, her hair flying, her cigarette held away from her like a wand.

95 Skinny Kozicki, shirt as loose as a scarecrow's, held the glistening plane above his head with his right hand, while keeping the propeller cocked with his left. Under his mother's instructions he aimed the plane into the wind, and with a deft flick of the wrist, launched it.

100 It flew beautifully, its propeller hummed. Riding air currents it soared above the grassy crown of Kozicki's hill, banked delicately over the tops of the trees, and swooped smoothly down towards the lake. Olive and golden brown, bullseyes winking.

"How far will it go?" Kozicki stood watching.

"Too far," his mother said. "Follow it, don't let it out of your sight."

105 The dog, stirred by the note in her voice, scrambled out from under the house, barked once, and chased their heels downhill. They ran like scissors, striding to outstrip gravity and updraft as the plane glided lakewards.

110 Hendershot, faster, loped with the grace of an animal through the jackpines by way of a shortcut. Kozicki followed the road, leaving his eyes free to trace the plane's progress. They ran joined in purpose but separate in route, wondering at the power of balsa wood and rubber bands. As he ran Kozicki felt the fearful pride of the builder, and though his breathing was desperate and his shirttails flapped in panic, he congratulated the machine for taking an idea to such a height,

Continued

and for such a distance. Ahead, off to the right, Hendershot charged through the bush exhilarated, his limbs delighted to be thus taxed by emergency.

115 "It's going down," Kozicki called. "Straight in front of you."

Hendershot burst from the trees directly into the alley behind Lakeshore Drive, dripping, mosquito-driven, flushed. His chest and arms were scratched by aggressive undergrowth, his prominent ribs heaved. But he was in time to see the plane descend beyond the flag pole in front of the Post Office, headed for what to him was familiar territory: the street in front of his family's store, Hendershot's Groceteria.

So when Kozicki arrived, knee split by a gravelly tumble, the two jogged confidently to the broad pavement of Wasagam's business section.

The plane, however, was not immediately visible. Not crushed by a car, nor 125 lifted by a thief, nor wedged like a suicidal bird in a punctured screen door, the plane was . . . they looked around . . . was *there!*, *up there!*, snagged by a wingtip in the glass insulator on top of an electric power pole, *the* power pole, in fact, which fed electricity to the businesses on Lakeshore Drive. They looked at the 130 plane, at the power pole, at the sunburned summer people who dawdled outside shop windows in bathing suits and sandals, unaware that this was some sort of picture, some sort of photograph.

Up he went. (Hendershot, storekeeper's son, athlete even at nine.) He shinnied up the pole with courage, vanity, love, but also with strong knees and gripping arms, heedless of the splinters, heedless of the shrieking swallows 135 (nested on the control box) that dive-bombed his vulnerable head, heedless of the fat man in the boater's cap who took his popsicle out and said, "You shouldn't be up there. You'll get hurt."

Heedless. Until, within reach at last of the stranded airplane, his grasping hand was stayed by the one note of outrage he knew by heart, his mother's command:

"Ian! Ian, stop, don't you touch that damn thing!"

She came out of the store in her summer leotards and grocer's apron, drawn there by the small crowd and the fat man under the power pole, drawn there by one of the twins, Monty, who'd shouted from the store's entrance that Ian had a 145 plane. The crowd opened to let her through—she was a tall woman—then closed to watch. Even the Tourists watched, because it was nice to see life on holiday, occasionally. They all watched, and heard Meg Hendershot order her second oldest son to come down—immediately—and not touch anything. Immediately.

They waited.

150 And immediately he reached out, grasped the plane, and sailed it gently to the street below.

Continued

The crowd applauded. The plane was followed by the Hendershot kid himself (look how careful he is coming *down*), who was soundly walloped around the ears by his mother. She was a big woman, full busted, wide-hipped and 155 handsome; congenial, usually. Nevertheless she bullied her son into the store . . . and dragged that twisted Kozicki kid along for good measure. In a voice raised to italics by fear and anger, she told them both . . .

160 *one time a kid climbed a power pole just to prove how smart he was and he sure proved it alright, 12000 volts shot right through his body and he was thrown to the ground where he writhed and screamed and burnt to a cinder and when it was all over he looked like a charred grasshopper so you just think about that.*

After which she wept, and drank a glass of scotch.

Don Dickinson
Contemporary Canadian writer and teacher

Credits

Isabel Huggan. “End of the Empire” from *You Never Know* (Viking Penguin, 1993). Reprinted under the Alberta Government Print Licence with CanCopy (Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency).

Carol Shields. “Neighbour” from *Signatures, Poems of Canada: One* (Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1976). Reprinted under the Alberta Government Print Licence with CanCopy (Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency).

John Murrell. *Waiting for the Parade* from *Scenes from Canadian Plays* (Fifth House Publishers, 1989). Reprinted under the Alberta Government Print Licence with CanCopy (Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency).

Ray Bradbury. “A Sip of Dandelion Wine” from *Reader’s Digest*, February 1992. Reprinted under the Alberta Government Print Licence with CanCopy (Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency).

Patricia Skalka. “It’s Not The Heat, It’s The Humidity” from *Reader’s Digest*, August 1992. Reprinted under the Alberta Government Print Licence with CanCopy (Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency).

Anne Rouse. “Air Ambulance” from *Times Literary Supplement*, December 10, 1993. Reprinted under the Alberta Government Print Licence with CanCopy (Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency).

Don Dickson. “The Mythical Kid” from *The New Press Anthology: Best Canadian Short Fiction* (General Publishing Co. Ltd., 1984). Reprinted under the Alberta Government Print Licence with CanCopy (Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency).

English 33: Part B
June 1998

